

"They will, O God! be done," passed from lips to lips. The women were as serene as saints waiting for a celestial flight.

Then it was that relief and salvation were near. Ropes and friendly hands came down through the skylight. It had been discovered that many of the passengers had not been able to escape from the saloon. Every energy was exerted for our rescue, and rescued we all were, though many were wounded and bruised while dragged over the waters amidst the floating furniture, the broken planks, and through the apertures of escape. We had no garments on but our night dresses; we were nearly naked and barefooted. All cares seemed absorbed in that for our personal deliverance. One by one we were pulled out of our watery prison, and lowered over the side of the *Alma* into boats below.

But that which received us was water-logged, and full of women and children. Happily it had been fastened to the side of the *Alma*. Two life-preservers were flung into the boat, and one of the sailors broke the head of a barrel which was used to bale out the water that had filled the little craft. Among those who had been aided down into the boat was an old lady who had lived more than fifty married years in India, and was returning with her husband, whose age exceeded fourscore, to end their long pilgrimage in their native land. Most touching was the anxiety they exhibited not to be "separated," whether for life or death. "O! let us two be preserved together, or together die." Though separated for a time, they were united again on the coral reef when the general gathering took place. May many a ray of brightness gild the evening of their existence!

A lifeboat which had already conveyed many passengers to the reef arrived, and we were transferred to its safer keeping and landed on the lower part of the coral island. Having neither shoes nor stockings, our feet were cruelly cut by the sharp and jagged coral, and we often fell on our hands, elbows and knees from the extreme pain of the wounds. Our object was to reach the higher point of the reef, as the waves were covering the spot where we were first put on shore. Those who had made some progress, and who had slippers and shoes, sent them to those who were barefooted. Curious were the devices for the protection of the sole. I tied my nightcap round what Beau Brummel called his "favourite foot," thus patronising one of my two supporters. When some sails had been saved they were turned into sandals, and enabled the wearers to brave the sharp edges of the serrated coral. We aided the ladies to reach the more elevated portion of the reef, where, to our great satisfaction, the deposits of birds convinced us that this reef was not usually covered by the tide. We learnt afterwards from the captain of the *Cyclops*, that he had seen the reef wholly submerged in waves, but to no such peril were we now exposed.

With the dawn of day, we perceived that many things had been brought away from the wreck. The mails were landed, and a portion of the luggage, much of which had been seriously damaged by the salt water. Though the gunpowder was all wetted, muskets, and such arms as could be got

at, were secured—two rockets were saved which we felt might be useful as signals—one of the two was employed for the purpose. The live-stock was brought on shore, but soon began to die off for want of drink. Of beer there was a good supply, some wine, some rum, but we suffered most from the inadequate provision of water, and that which was brought on shore was brackish from the mixture of the sea.

Our first care was to provide for the safety of the party, of whom more than three hundred and fifty were landed on the reef. An attack from the Arabs was among probable contingencies, especially after the exasperation caused by the late hostile proceedings against Djedda. The name of the reef on which we found ourselves is *Moorahedjerah*—it may be seen in all the large charts—is between Moka and Hodeida, near the Harnish Islands, and about twenty-five miles from the Arabian coast.

Sails, spars and ropes were brought from the wreck, rude tents were constructed, and afforded some, though a very insufficient, shelter from the vertical rays of the sun. Most of the ladies, children, and some of the aged and infirm were escorted or carried to the highest part of the reef, where every possible arrangement was made for their comfort and accommodation. Bolsters, pillows, blankets and garments were collected, and invariably appropriated to those who needed them most. The ascent to the ladies' bivouac was somewhat steep and rugged, but nothing was wanting on the part of the men to alleviate their sufferings, and to furnish such appliances for their relief as were accessible. And well indeed did they deserve, and well repay our solicitudes—their conduct was equally patient and heroic. Indeed a more striking display of multitudinous virtues could hardly have been exhibited. Everywhere the young were ministering to the old—the strong to the feeble—the men to the women—the women to the children. Nor were the virtues alone called into action, it seemed as if sagacity and foresight were almost supernaturally brightened, everything was thought of that prudence could suggest, and devotion accomplish—everywhere was order, everywhere harmony, good-will, full trust in those to whom the direction was confided, and theirs was a most onerous and responsible task, which they admirably fulfilled.

There had been indeed a short period during which the maternal agonies could hardly be restrained. Many of the children were supposed to have been drowned, and several who had fallen into the water were rescued by the unwearied efforts of those who plunged in after them to save them. Not one of them perished, but some mothers while they were inquiring in mortal distress after the fate of their offspring, received children that were not their own. But when all had been restored to those who claimed them, cries and clamours subsided into smiles and gratitude, and from that moment there reigned a calm and a confidence unbroken.

Among the passengers were a considerable number of officers—both in the Queen's and the Company's service, returning to England from India. To those was confided the distribution of the warlike weapons with which those were armed who

undertook the guardianship and protection of the camp and of the provisions. They were our sentinels at night as our companions by day.

Our purser was one of the most robust of men. He usually conducted the religious worship on board, and we had heard him only a day or two before read the funeral service over two of our companions, when they were committed to the deep. Upon him much depended, he exposed himself to the sun, and seemed confused with the sense of his heavy responsibilities. He became delirious and frenzied, and it was scarcely possible to hold him, so violent were his contortions, while his cries were loud and furious; they were stilled by death, and in a few hours—it not being possible to dig a grave in the hard coral, his corpse was flung into the sea. There were several other distressing cases of suffering from sun-strokes, but none but this had a fatal termination.

We had been joined at Aden by a party of eight gentlemen, who had been engaged in laying down the electric telegraph from Suez. Their services and knowledge of localities were invaluable to us. One of them volunteered to accompany one of the ship's boats to Moka, in order to seek there succour and supplies, especially of water, of which we were so lamentably in want. There were no sounds more addening than those of the children crying for "pani! pani!—water! water!" which it was impossible to give them in sufficient quantity to satisfy their cravings. The men came to an early resolution that such water as had been saved should be given only to the sick, the women and the children. The boat, in consequence of the absence of winds, and the presence of mists, did not reach Moka till the following afternoon. She took with her a Mahomedan Hadji merchant, who was among our passengers, and our representatives were kindly received by the authorities, who undertook to send us a quantity of water. It had not, however, arrived, when two days after, we left the reef. Another party had gone to a neighbouring island, where they found wells with water, but it was brackish and disagreeable to the taste. After accomplishing their mission at Moka, the boat's party proceeded to the Straits of Bab-el-Mandeb, where they found H.M.S. Cyclops, which had been directed by the Admiralty to assist in the service of the Electric Telegraph Company. The Cyclops had fortunately been detained by head-winds. To her, under Providence, we afterwards owed our redemption.

The passengers were divided into two principal groups—one at the top of the reef; another, and by far the most numerous, scattered about below, where they found (during part of the day), shadow from a portion of the reef, which ran up somewhat abruptly; but it was close and sultry within, and the atmosphere under the awnings somewhat impure.

There were cases of fever, and it was to be apprehended that if they assumed a typhoid and contagious character, a great mortality would have resulted. At times the sun's heat was intolerable, as his beams descended directly on our heads; but we found great relief from keeping our hair and foreheads wet with rags steeped in the salt water, hot though it was, and in having streams of it poured upon our necks. These precautions

secured many from strokes of the sun, and restored others who were suffering from such strokes. Moreover, we found that salt water so employed alleviated our burning thirst. For food there was little appetite; and of the animals that were landed, I believe very few were slaughtered. As neither Mohammedans nor Hindoos drink spirituous liquors, it was necessary to apportion among them a part of the water saved. A black man stole a tin can of water more than his portion: he was cut down by one of the officers on the watch. There was but one other melancholy exception to the general concurrence in, and obedience to, these regulations, whose observance was the main cause of our safety and security. The sinner belonged—and to say!—he belonged to the Indian army; an officer of rank. He said he had appropriated the two bottles of beer, which were found secreted on him, in order to ascertain whether the watch was vigilant. Let his name and shame be buried in oblivion together! The verdict of those who heard the defence was an appropriate punishment for the misdoing. In bright contrast to such malfassance, let one act of devotion be recorded: and it would be easy to select many such acts. There was an officer of the same military rank as the offender, the bones of whose middle finger were splintered by the fall of the mast of the Alma, having been caught by one of the ropes. For four-and-twenty hours no instrument could be found to amputate the mutilated member. Wholly forgetful of his sufferings, and being selected as a leader, there was not only no relaxation in his exertions, but he was one of the most active and useful of our auxiliaries. No thought of self interfered for a moment with the claims of self-sacrificing courage.

Another of the gentlemen, belonging to the Electric Telegraph Expedition, was charged with the general custody and distribution of the provisions saved from the wreck, and excellently did he justify the confidence that was placed in his sagacity. He was as firm in courteously resisting unreasonable requirements, as he was considerate in kind concessions to those who had peculiar claims to urge. The care required was not only with reference to the supply of immediate wants, but to provide for our uncertain, and possibly prolonged, detention on the reef; and so to use our resources as to secure us, as far as possible, against whatever might happen. No doubt there were a few pardonable pious frauds, in which a husband obtained for a wife, or a father for his children, somewhat more than their just proportion; but as there was no real cause of complaint, so there were no complainings.

The party was separated into smaller groups, messes we called them, of from ten to fourteen each. Every mess selected a head; and the lists being given to the commissary-in-chief, the head received in the morning and at night the beer, wine, and rum allotted to his care, and for whose fair apportionment he was deemed responsible. On one occasion some ice was discovered, and a lump was given to each of the ladies. There were two or three great festivals, when soup, made of preserved vegetables and salt water was distributed. It has often been my lot to sit at the

table of monarchs and share the luxuries of *gourmandise* with some of the most illustrious students and judges of culinary arts, but for intense enjoyment give me, on a coral reef, under a tropical sun, when faint and famished—give me a basin of preserved vegetable and salt water soup! Assuredly neither Beauvilliers nor Soyier ever provided such delicious fare! If delicacies pall upon the palate of the satiated—if dry bread be sweet to the mouth of the hungry—there is something far beyond the enjoyment of common luxury, when, exhausted with weariness, parched and panting with thirst, the glass, whose drops are more delicious than nectar, is raised to the lips.

The comfort of bathing was great, especially before sunrise; yet so deceitful was the flight of time, that, believing it to be five A.M., I once made my way to the edge of the reef, and found afterwards that it was only one hour after midnight. It required no small care to escape being cut by the sharp edges of the coral; but there were some places where soft green sea-weeds covered the surface, on which it was delicious to lay ourselves down, and to allow the surges to flow over and refresh the body.

Above the reef, gulls and sea-birds flew and screamed as they passed over our heads, little used to such interruptions of their solitude; but we were wholly freed from the molestations of those insect visitants which are such torments to tropical life.

In the numbers of which our party was composed, the four quarters of the world were undoubtedly represented; for, to say nothing of the ordinary crew of a steamer plying east of the Cape, in which will be found negroes attending to the fires, Mahomedans and Hindoos of various classes charged with the ordinary functions of seamen, Chinamen as cooks and carpenters, Manillamen for pilots and steerers; while among the European sailors there will be generally discovered an infusion of Danes and Dutch and other maritime nations—independently of this motley crew, our passengers represented a great variety of tribes and tongues: people there were from North and South America, from Australia, many Anglo-Indians, and many of pure English blood, who had never visited the country of their sires. In Galle we heard of the European war; and in the same apartments were a Frenchman and an Austrian, who thenceforward called themselves, to our great amusement, "intimate enemies," and fought for the politics and reputation of their governments and people with becoming and earnest patriotism.

There was a considerable party of Spaniards and Filipinos about to visit the "renowned romantic land," so great and chivalric in its history, and which seen from the remoteness of a Spanish colony, and pictured in the teaching of the clergy and their colleagues, has lost nothing of its greatness or its glory. The Spaniards having at first no interpreter, had been utterly forgotten; and, on the first day, received no portion of the allotted beverages. One of them had a sun-stroke, and it was some time before his condition could be made known to the medical people. I found him held down by his countrymen, calling out in the wildest delirium for his madre! madre! (mother! mother!) One old man especially interested me.

He had taken under his charge a bright-eyed boy—an Ilocan Indian—and on many occasions I saw the bent and wrinkled *Asicano* giving a large part of his own supplies to the fainting youth. That youth had often amused and instructed me, an inquirer as to the Ilocos branch of the Tegilloc idiom, which is the most widely disseminated of the native languages of the northern portion of the Philippines. The Spaniards did full justice to the demeanour of our English women. *Hor!* differently, they said, would Spanish ladies have acted! It would have been impossible to subdue their fears or to control their passions.

Both the Spanish and the Nethelands Archipelago are now brought into regular steam communication with Europe by branches of the great Peninsular and Oriental Company. Hong Kong is the point of contact with Manila. Singapore with Batavia; and, at Singapore we had a large accession of Dutch families, with their Javanese servants, and many children of native mothers and European fathers, speaking only the Malay tongue. The various nationalities—if so broad a name can be given to the many races, who call themselves the subjects of the same prince or power—presented singular contrasts in action, and in suffering, under circumstances so likely to develop character; but we may well be pleased with and proud of the bearing of Englishmen and Englishwomen, our women especially, when placed in extreme difficulty and danger. The noblest qualities expand and strengthen with the urgency for their exercise.

There were several sick people among the wrecked passengers. Such was the care they experienced that, with the exception of the purser, there was no case of death upon the reef. One gentleman died after our rescue, but his situation had been long deemed hopeless.

On the third day it was necessary to diminish the allotments of beer and wine. It was served out in half-glasses in the mess to which I belonged, but there was no flagging of courage or fortitude; on the contrary, a sort of presentiment prevailed among us that relief was at hand.

Let me mention here as somewhat relative and illustrative, that I had been haunted by strange visions during my unquiet slumbers on the reef. On one occasion a handsome Italian lady—a companion of our misfortune—appeared, in my dreams,—her face was close to mine; its beauty was gradually changed into deformity; the hair was loosened from its roots; the features were extinguished; it became a naked skull, and then slowly moved away. It was followed by the visage of a bearded man, which looked searchingly upon and into me. Then the beard fell off; the eyes dropped from their sockets; the countenance became a hideous and offensive mass—which was also slowly transformed to a skull and disappeared; to be followed by another head, which, after glaring at me, became discoloured by pustules and tumours which rent the skin; the flesh was loosened, it detached itself from the bones, leaving nothing but a skull, which, like its predecessors, then departed. There were, at least, twenty such visitations—unlike another—each looking intensely into my face; and, after undergoing frightful transformations, all assumed the appearance of crania, and like

Banquo's ghost, glided away from sight. I remember that I preserved perfect serenity during these strange appearances, which gave evidence, no doubt, of a somewhat fevered intellect, acted upon by the excitement of the events of the day. The dream was but the uncovering of the passing scene, on which the shadows of death were so adjacent to the business of life.

And the morning of the fourth day brought us deliverance. The boat which had gone to Moka, proceeded to Aden, and in the Straits found H.M. steamer Cyclops, Captain Pullen, which, though about to depart in another direction, had fortunately been detained by strong head-winds, and lost not a moment in hastening to our rescue; the crew having put themselves on short commons in order to secure to us more abundant supplies. Shouts of "A steamer! a steamer!" were echoed and re-echoed over the reef. What gratulations! what embracing! what tears of joy! Soon water-barrels were rolling to the tents; tea was provided in abundance. A hundred ready hands, moved by clear heads and warm hearts, were engaged in our service. Shoes were found for the shoeless—garments for the ragged and naked. The sick ladies were first conveyed on cots to the ship; then the rest of the women and the children; the men followed, and in a few hours all but the principal officers and native crew of the Alma, who remained on the reef in charge of the wreck, were transferred to the Cyclops; where they found a welcome, than which none was ever warmer, on the part of the sailors, or more acceptable to those who were the objects and recipients of the overflowing kindness. Every man was inquiring what he could do for our comfort, offering anything he possessed as if he were receiving not conferring a favour. Our feelings may be judged of by the address which was signed by all the passengers of the Alma, who, though they had lost a large portion of their effects, and many were absolutely penniless, raised a sum of about 140*l.* which was presented to the noble crew to whom they were so much indebted. There is reason to believe the Lords of the Admiralty have given evidence of their just appreciation of the services rendered by the officers and crew of the Cyclops. The passengers themselves addressed a testimonial of their gratitude to them, and especially to their captain, W. L. J. Pullen.

Before leaving the reef, the Lascars were drawn up in a line, and called upon to restore the plunder they had taken from the passengers. Most of them flung behind them the money and the jewels of which they had possessed themselves, and the value was said to be considerable. One gentleman recovered an amount of about eighty pounds in gold, of which he had been despoiled. It was universally felt to be a sore grievance, and has been made the subject of strong representations and remonstrances to the Peninsular and Oriental Company, that the persons and property of passengers on board their steamers in the Eastern Seas, are exposed to so much additional danger from the immense preponderance of the black races on whom the navigation of the ship depends. Independently of the officers, the European seamen did not amount to one-twentieth part of the

whole crew. The untrustworthiness of the Lascars in cases requiring confidence and courage has been but too commonly experienced by our countrymen, but the experience has not produced the needful change.

Closely packed, no doubt, but with thankful and joyful hearts, and thinking less of the perils we had encountered, than of the privileges we enjoyed, we steered away to Aden, which we reached on the following day. Aden has few accommodations—no hotels, or lodging-houses—but the ready services of everybody were at our disposal, and by the distribution of the passengers on all sides, shelter was found and food and rest.

About half the passengers (109 in number), availed themselves of the first opportunity of reaching Suez, which was afforded by the Peninsular and Oriental Company's steamer "Bombay." These persons, no doubt, caused some inconvenience to the Bombay's people. Our presence was loudly complained of, and bitterly remonstrated against, by those who represented themselves as already uncomfortably crowded; but no sympathy has to my knowledge been expressed with the complainers.

J. B.

